

FIVE

FIVE HISTORIC CEMETERIES.
FIVE TEAM PARTNERS.
FIVE COMMUNITY MEETINGS.
HUNDREDS OF STAKEHOLDERS.
ONE MASTER PLAN.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

Issue 1, May 2014



Next Community Meeting

Thursday, June 26, 2014
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Northwest Recreation Center
2913 Northland Drive
Austin, TX 78757



Master Plan Kicks Off

The City of Austin held the first community meeting for the Cemetery Master Plan on Wednesday, April 30, 2014, at the Austin Public Library's Carver branch in East Austin. The master plan project, which officially began in March, will include a total of five meetings as part of an extensive community outreach and engagement effort.

The April 30 meeting was well-attended, with nearly 50 participants from various neighborhoods and several community organizations. PARD project coordinator Kim McKnight welcomed everyone and introduced City staff. Attendees learned about the project plan, met the consultant team, and provided feedback, including questions and comments. The next meeting will be held on June 26 at the Northwest Recreation Center. Everyone is invited to attend and participate.



What is a Master Plan?

The term *master plan* is commonly used by city planners to describe a document that provides a long-term framework for future activity. The word *master*, in this context, indicates that the plan is comprehensive and that it includes the community's goals for itself as well as a clear plan for achieving them. Master plans often assemble large amounts of data, which are then organized into a format that make them easy to use.

The process of creating a master plan includes consulting with the public, particularly those *stakeholders* who have a strong interest in the project or who are likely to be affected by the project results. Master plans also solicit the opinions of experts and include their recommendations.

The purpose of the Austin Cemetery Master Plan is to provide the City with guidance for the preservation and development of the five historic municipal cemeteries by examining the condition of the cemeteries, establishing goals for the cemeteries, and providing an Implementation Guide to meet those goals.

Master plans are designed to evolve over time, as conditions change. Rather than simply prescribing a solution or direction, the Austin Cemetery Master Plan will include guidelines to help the City as new opportunities or challenges arise in the future.

Contents

The Austin Cemetery Master Plan will include:

- The history of all five city-owned cemeteries
- Inventory and condition assessment of all above-ground features
- Preservation and conservation analysis and recommendations
- Site analysis and complete landscape plan for each cemetery
- Going-forward plan for addressing policy and funding concerns
- GIS database and maps
- Survey, condition assessment, and recommendations for the treatment of cemetery trees

Meet the Project Team



Mason Miller
AmaTerra Environmental, Inc.
Project Manager
GIS Mapping, Archaeology



Laura Knott
John Milner Associates, Inc.
Principal Investigator
Landscape Architecture



Steph McDougal
McDoux Preservation LLC
Historic Preservation Consultant
Research, Public Engagement



Davey Tree Service
Tree Survey



Help for Cemetery Trees

Arborists and GIS mapping pros team up to create a database of locations and conditions of cemetery trees

It's no secret that Austin was hit hard by the severe drought that began in 2011. The Texas A&M Forest Service estimated that more than 5 million urban trees were lost due to drought — either directly or because they became more susceptible to disease or infestation as a result of drought-related stress. Live oak and red oak trees are also threatened by a contagious disease called oak wilt.

In order to assess the health of the trees in Austin's municipal cemeteries, a team of arborists and analysts are working together to create a GIS (Geographic Information System) database and maps that show the locations and conditions of many of these trees. Individual trees larger than two inches in diameter (in open areas) or more than eight inches in diameter (in forested areas) are

tagged and numbered, and any health condition, damage, or threat is recorded. The team is also mapping the location of stumps where dead or diseased trees have already been removed. Once all of that information is entered into a database, maps can be generated to help Austin's Urban Forestry staff identify issues and prepare treatment plans to preserve cemetery trees.

Fast Facts about Tree Surveys

✿ The numbered tags used to identify trees for the cemetery tree survey are attached with special aluminum nails that will not hurt the tree or damage a saw if the tree has to be removed later.

✿ A tag *does not* mean that a tree has been marked for removal.

✿ Surveyors are recording more than 10 attributes for each tree, including species, health, and diameter. To speed up their work, arborists use a special "diameter at breast height" or DBH tape, which measures circumference and automatically converts it to diameter.



✿ The surveyors are using highly accurate GPS systems to record the locations of trees within 8–20 inches of accuracy. Standard GPS units are only accurate to about 40 feet.



Recognizing & Protecting Historic Cemeteries

It's easy to become confused by the many different ways that historic cemeteries can be officially recognized. And only one of these historic designations protect the cemeteries.

Some of Austin's municipal cemeteries are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and as Historic Texas Cemeteries, and two are protected as City of Austin Historic Landmarks and. Historical subject markers from the Texas Historical Commission are also found in some Austin cemeteries.

It is possible for a cemetery to be officially designated as "historic" at the state, local, and/or federal levels. Some of these designations provide mostly recognition, while others include regulatory oversight by a government agency. Each type of historic designation has its own specific implications for the property owner (in this case, the City of Austin). This article will explain the different ways that historic cemeteries can be recognized and, in some cases, protected for future generations.

The National Register of Historic Places

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places recognizes, but does not protect, a historic place.

In order to be listed on the National Register, someone must prepare a nomination form that documents the reasons why a cemetery is *historically significant*. The National Park Service, which manages the National Register, defines significance as:

- A. Association with events that contributed to the broad patterns of our history
- B. Association with the lives of people who are significant in our past
- C. Containing monuments, artworks, buildings, or landscapes that are good representatives of their style or period or are works of a master designer, artist, or craftsman

- D. Having yielded or being likely to yield information important in prehistory or history, such as material culture or social history

Several other special criteria are used by National Register staff at the Texas Historical Commission to evaluate and justify the significance of historic cemeteries.

While this may seem complicated, historic preservation specialists and other historians have the training and knowledge to successfully complete the research necessary to prepare National Register nominations.

Oakwood Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery Annex are already listed on the National Register.

The Master Plan project will include much of the background research needed to help prepare National Register nominations for Austin's historic cemeteries in the future.

(continued on next page)

Historic Texas Cemeteries

The Texas Historical Commission recognizes burial grounds with the Historic Texas Cemeteries (HTC) marker. Over time, some cemeteries — especially smaller graveyards in rural areas — may become difficult to locate. The HTC program is designed to make sure that present and future owners of the land adjacent to the cemetery are aware of its existence.

If a cemetery is approved for the HTC designation, the applicant is required to record an official Declaration of Dedication with the county clerk's office, which transfers with the sale of the property. The HTC designation does not restrict the property owner's use of the land adjacent to the cemetery or the operation of the cemetery itself. A cemetery designated as an HTC may display an official HTC marker. Austin Memorial Park and Oakwood Cemetery are currently designated as Historic Texas Cemeteries.

Texas Historical Markers

Another, separate Texas Historical Commission program uses historical "subject" markers to commemorate people who made lasting contributions to the State of Texas, community organizations, or businesses, and to recognize events that changed the course of local or state history. Some of these markers are found within cemeteries. For example, Oakwood Cemetery contains historical markers at the grave of Susanna Dickinson, who (with her infant daughter) was one of the only two survivors of the Alamo, and at the grave of Major William "Buck" Walton, who served as the Texas attorney general.



Which marker is which?
This medallion only appears
on Historic Texas Cemetery
markers, not subject markers.

City Historic Landmarks

The City of Austin's historic preservation ordinance makes it possible for the City to preserve and manage historic properties through zoning overlays. It has used this authority to designate Oakwood Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery Annex as City Historic Landmarks. As a result, before any new construction or changes can be made at Oakwood or Oakwood Annex, the City Landmarks Commission must approve the project.

Since all burial plots have been sold and no new internments are taking place at Oakwood or Oakwood Annex Cemeteries, the types of changes likely to be requested are relatively few. Restoring or rehabilitating the 1914 Chapel building, fences, or gates would require Commission approval, as would changes to infrastructure, such as the drainage channel or roadways.

Ordinary maintenance and repair activities do not require approval by the Landmarks Commission.

Contact Information for City Officials

Mayor and City Council

Austin City Hall
301 W. Second St. Second Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Mayor Lee Leffingwell

City Council Members:

Sheryl Cole, mayor pro tem

Mike Martinez

Laura Morrison

Chris Riley

Bill Spelman

Kathie Tovo

Office of the City Manager

P. O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767
512-974-2200

City Manager Marc Ott

Deputy City Manager
Michael McDonald

Assistant City Managers:

Rey Arellano

Robert Goode

Sue Edwards

Bert Lumberras

Anthony Snipes

Parks and Recreation Department

P. O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767
512-974-9467

Director Sara Hensley

Assistant Directors:
Kimberly McNeeley
Cora Wright

Project Coordinator
Kim McKnight

Cemetery Manager
Gilbert Hernandez



Our Mission

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide, protect, and preserve a park system that promotes quality recreational, cultural, and outdoor experiences for the Austin community.



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-9478.



We Want You! to Participate in the Master Plan Process

In order for this project to be successful, it needs to be inclusive and representative of the Austin community. You can help and make your voice heard. Here's how:

✿ Attend one or more community meetings. The meetings are being held in various locations around the city and on different days and times, so that as many people as possible can attend. The next one will take place on **Thursday, June 26, 2014** from **6:00 – 8:00 p.m.** at the **Northwest Recreation Center at 2913 Northland Drive.**

✿ Sign up to receive this newsletter via email, or look for it at your local library, community center, or senior center. Share it with your friends and neighbors.

✿ Sign up for the Austin Cemetery Master Plan email list to get up-to-the-minute information right in your inbox. To subscribe, send an email to Kim.McKnight@AustinTexas.gov.

✿ Participate in Speak Up Austin! Surveys: COMING SOON!

✿ Visit the Austin Cemetery Master Plan website at <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/cemetery-master-plan>

✿ Share your input and feedback with Kim McKnight (PARD Project Coordinator):

- Email kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov
- Call 512-974-9478
- Send a letter to PARD, Attn: Kim McKnight, P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767-1088

✿ Call the Austin 3-1-1 line and share your opinions.





The City of Austin Cemetery Master Plan

Next community meeting:

June 26, 2014

6:00–8:00 p.m.

Northwest Recreation Center
2913 Northland Drive.

Learn more at www.cityofaustin.org/parks

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767-1088